



Dr. Kopano Mabaso

Dr. Kopano Mabaso is a South African medical doctor currently undertaking a DPhil (PhD) in Population Health at the University of Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar. She is the founder & Co-Director of Transitions Foundation an organization that seeks to help South Africa's youth transition from hopelessness to personal fulfilment, working with school children through after school programmes in the Midrand area. Kopano is a published fiction writer and the winner of the European Literary Award (2007) and joint winner of the Wole Soyinka Prize for Literature in Africa (2010). In 2008 and 2009 she was singled out as one of 300 young South Africans 'you must take to lunch' by the Mail & Guardian Newspaper.

How did your own education influence your involvement in education currently?

I come from a family of educators, my mother, grandparents and many of my aunts and uncles are former teachers. And as is the case with many black South Africans, all of them grew up very poor. So I was taught from a young age to pay careful mind to my school books, because that was the key to a better life. I took that advice very seriously and it has proven to be true. Education has taken me to places nobody in my family, including myself, could have ever imagined. It's one of the few things in life, nobody can take away from you and it gives you a quiet confidence that spurs you on to continuously challenge yourself further. When I saw what education had done for myself and my family I felt compelled to make that possible for others. And it was for those reasons that I, with the support of family & friends, founded [Transitions Foundation](#) in 2011.



What advice do you have for other aspiring women leaders?

There is nothing that hard work cannot achieve. You have no idea what you are capable of until you try, and in a country where almost 50% of our people live in abject poverty, you owe to those who can't to uplift yourself so that you can uplift others.

What one way could you, or would you, contribute to a better future for South Africa?

My dream is to create a no-fee school for talented children from disadvantaged backgrounds. At present in South Africa, a good quality education can, for the most part, only be purchased in the private sector, where parents pay exorbitant fees to secure their child a good quality education. But in a country where almost half of the population lives in poverty, this premium education is unaffordable to the majority of South Africans and thus means poor children and their children thereafter will be destined to a life of poverty. I would like to create schools that break this vicious cycle and bring shared prosperity to our beautiful country.